



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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CONTACT: Maureen Cragin
Ryan Vaart
(202) 225-2539

DELAY OF NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM WILL "INCREASE RISK TO AMERICANS"

"Today's decision by President Clinton to defer deployment of a national missile defense (NMD) system will increase the risk to Americans and postpone by at least another year the day when all Americans will be protected against the growing threat of ballistic missile attack.

"Although disappointed by this decision, I am not surprised by it. The Clinton-Gore Administration has always been opposed to NMD deployment. The President dramatically cut NMD funding after taking office. He vetoed the fiscal year 1996 National Defense Authorization Act because of its commitment to deploy NMD. Last year, he initially opposed but ultimately signed H.R. 4, the National Missile Defense Act of 1999, which established a policy to deploy national missile defenses 'as soon as is technologically possible.' The President then disregarded this policy after the bill was enacted, even though it passed both houses of Congress by overwhelming bipartisan majorities.

"During the Clinton-Gore Administration, the Congress has repeatedly added funds to the President's NMD budget request in order to allow the program to move forward toward meeting a timely deployment schedule commensurate with the ballistic missile threats we face.

"Yet now the President has decided – again – to leave Americans vulnerable to ballistic missile attack. This will surely be his final legacy."

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